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ABSTRACT

A survey of Illinois secondary school speech teachers was conducted in 1970 so that a profile of the secondary school speech teacher could be constructed from the perspective of how teachers view themselves. Replies were received from 55 teachers representing 37% of the sample and 12% of Illinois schools with speech activity programs. Among the results obtained about teachers' classroom activities were that the majority of teachers used an approach emphasizing performance skills; that while listening was studied in most classrooms, for the most part it was studied for less than 10% of the total class time; that teachers viewed themselves as communication models for students; and that teachers used a considerable amount of supplemental material in addition to lectures and textbooks. With regard to teacher preparation, it was found that the majority of speech teachers had majored in speech and that the majority who had done graduate work had done so in speech. Among the information obtained about extracurricular activities was that the typical speech activities were (in rank order) individual events, drama, debate, and public service communication; that administrative support for both curricular and extracurricular activities was perceived as strong; and that budget allocations for forensics varied greatly among schools. (GT)

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PROFILES OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL SPEECH TEACHER:

THE TEACHER'S VIEW

Presented at Illinois Speech and Theatre Association Convention
October 18-20, Chicago, Illinois

by

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Communication educators at different levels have sought some common understanding of the goals and methods at each level of education. Approximately every other year the Illinois Speech and Theatre Association sponsors a convention program at which secondary school educators and university educators have tried to understand what each other is about. Frequently secondary school teachers complain that student teachers aren't prepared to do what their job requires. In an effort to provide a basis for understanding the different perspectives on the task of being a Speech teacher, the Communication Education Commission of ISTA sponsored a research project during 1970 to build a set of three profiles of the secondary school Speech teacher. One part was to construct a profile from the perspective of how the secondary school Speech teacher views himself/herself. A second part was to construct a profile from the perspective of how the administrator views the secondary school Speech teacher. Finally, a third part was to construct a profile from the perspective of how university teacher education faculty perceive the secondary school Speech teacher. It was hoped that comparing these three profiles would shed light on the task of teaching secondary school Speech. This paper seeks to provide a profile from the secondary school teachers' view. The goals will be achieved by reporting the procedures used to obtain data, presenting data obtained, and finally by constructing a profile.

Procedures

The task was to obtain a representative and fairly comprehensive view. It was decided to use a sampling of secondary school Speech teachers in public and private high schools in Illinois which have some kind of speech program. There are approximately 850 high schools in Illinois. Approximately 450 have

entered some category of extra-curricular activities. The Illinois High School Association list of entering schools was used to generate a mailing list of 150 schools. It was decided to seek input from a sample proportionally representing schools which enter debate, individual events, and drama competition. It was determined that 25 schools entering debate would be selected; 75 schools entering individual events would be selected; and 50 schools entering drama would be selected. Stratified random selection procedures were used to select a list of schools such that there would be a proportional geographical distribution. The lists were checked for duplication. Duplications were replaced by randomly selecting from remaining schools on the original IHSA lists. Therefore, 150 Speech teachers received a questionnaire (see Exhibit A).

The questionnaire was constructed by considering the following sources; (1) items generated by the Communication Education Commission as important items; (2) items utilized in previous studies (Ince, 1967; Tuttle, 1974; Jacobs, 1976) to allow for some continuity. Questions were in the teaching, preparation, extra-curricular role.

Replies were received from 55 teachers representing 37 percent of the sample. The replies also represent 12 percent of schools with speech activity programs.

Results

Profile of the Speech Teacher in the Classroom

It seems appropriate for this analysis to start in the natural habitat of a teacher and the classroom. The results indicate that of all the teachers questioned, 59 percent teach speech full-time. However, the courses taught by

teachers varied from basic speech courses to a variety of electives. Ninety-five percent of teachers sampled reported that they taught a basic speech course. Of these courses, 67 percent constituted a requirement for students. A more specific breakdown of what type schools require speech is to be found in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1

Percent Requiring Basic Speech

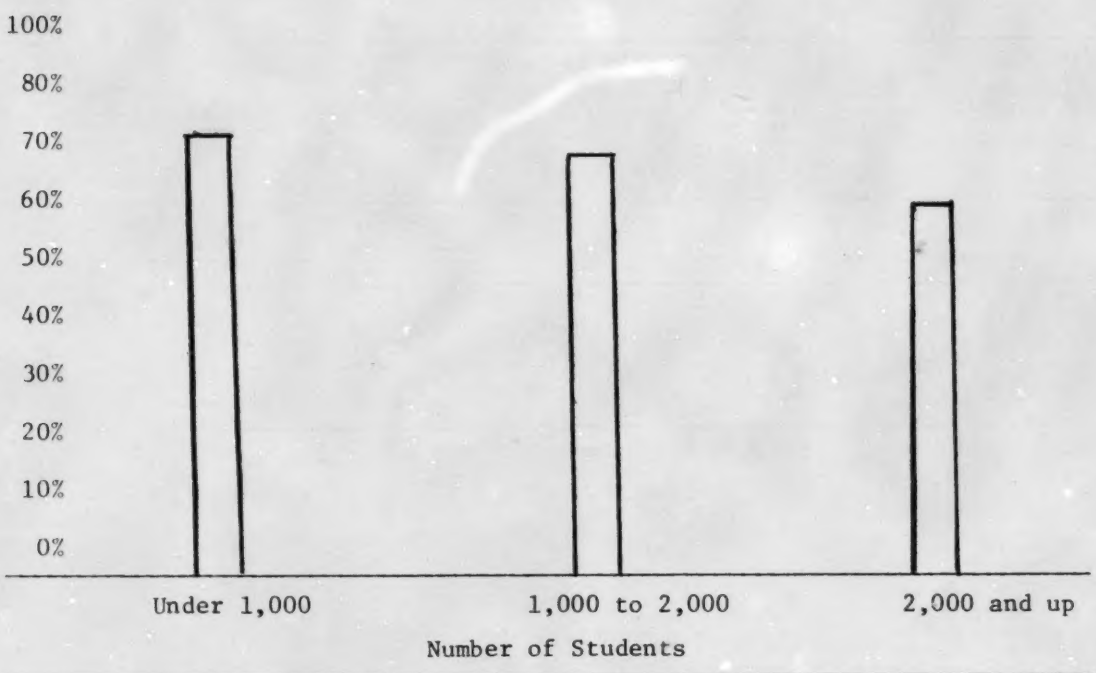
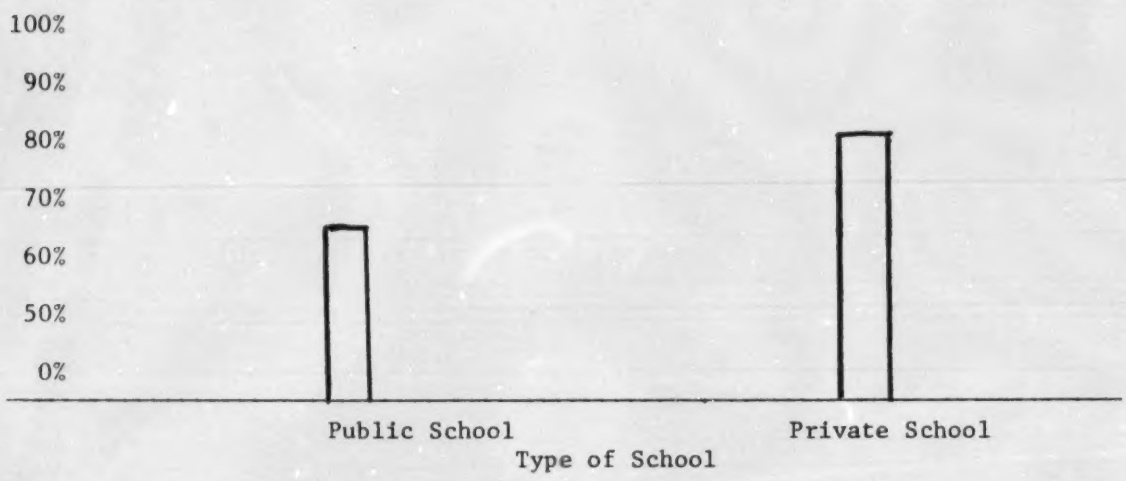


TABLE 2

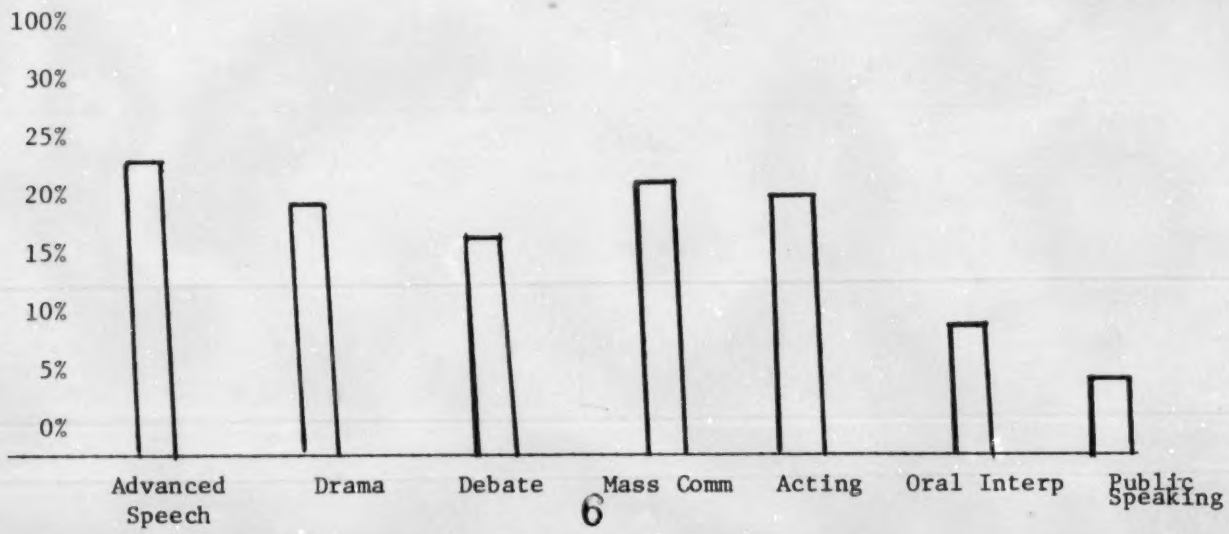
Percent Requiring Basic Speech



Results indicated a number of special or advanced courses as being taught. Some are taught in only one or two schools. Table 3 reporst speech and theatre courses reported as being taught on a fairly widespread basis in Illinois high schools.

TABLE 3

Percent of Schools Offering Advanced Courses

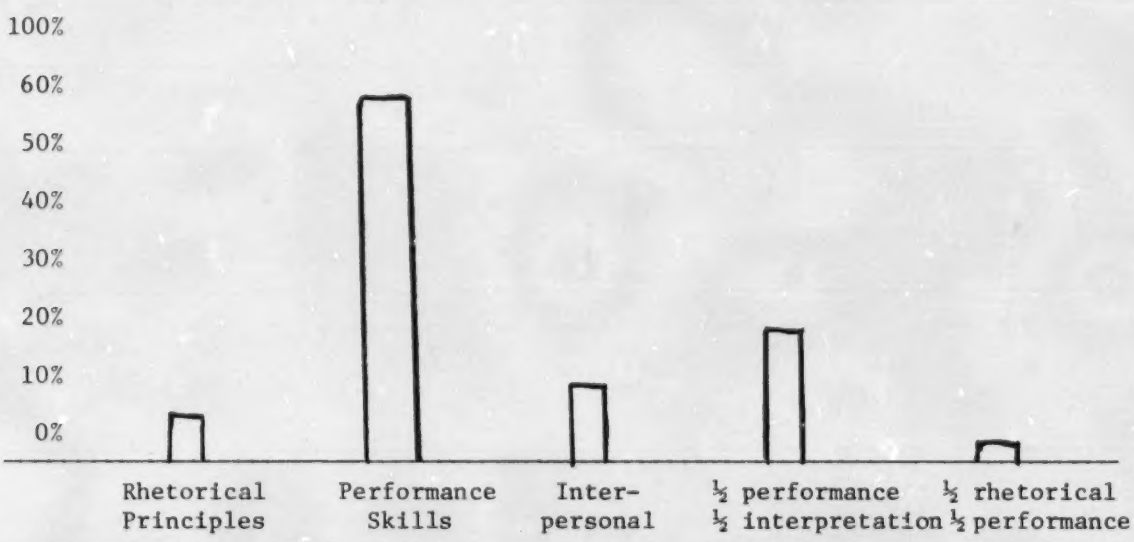


The following courses were taught in less than .9% of all high schools sampled: Sophomore English, Speech, Interviewing/Discussion, Reader's Theatre, American Theatre Literature, Directing, Technical Theatre, Interpersonal, and Persuasion.

In teaching the basic course, several approaches were reported as being used. The data indicates that 87 percent of teachers followed an approach they used was due to either a stated or unstated department or district policy. Frequency of approaches is reported in Table 4.

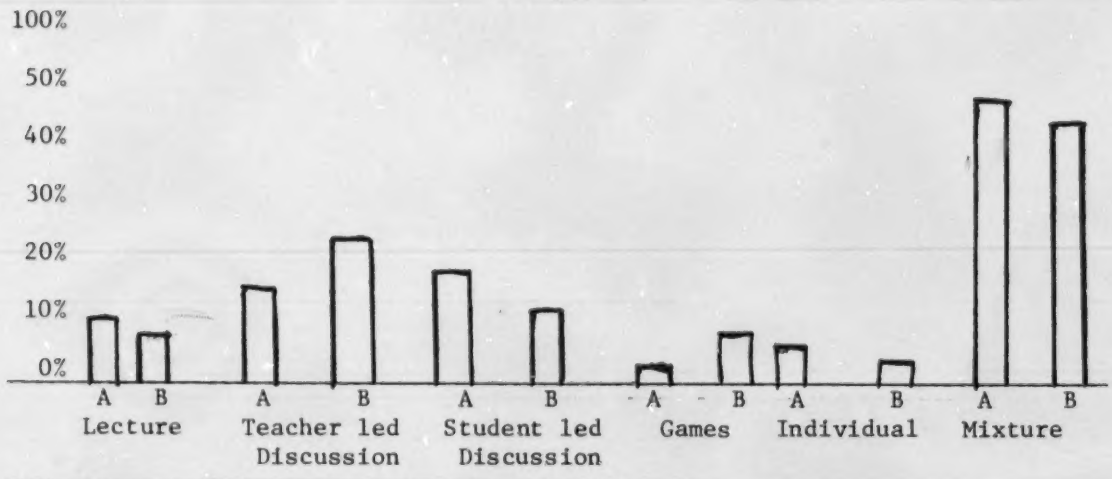
TABLE 4

Approaches



During class, teachers claim to use the following methods: lecture, teacher led discussions, student centered discussions, game similuation, individualized, or a mixture of the above. A breakdown showing the percentage that each method is used in basic and advanced courses is provided in Table 5.

TABLE 5

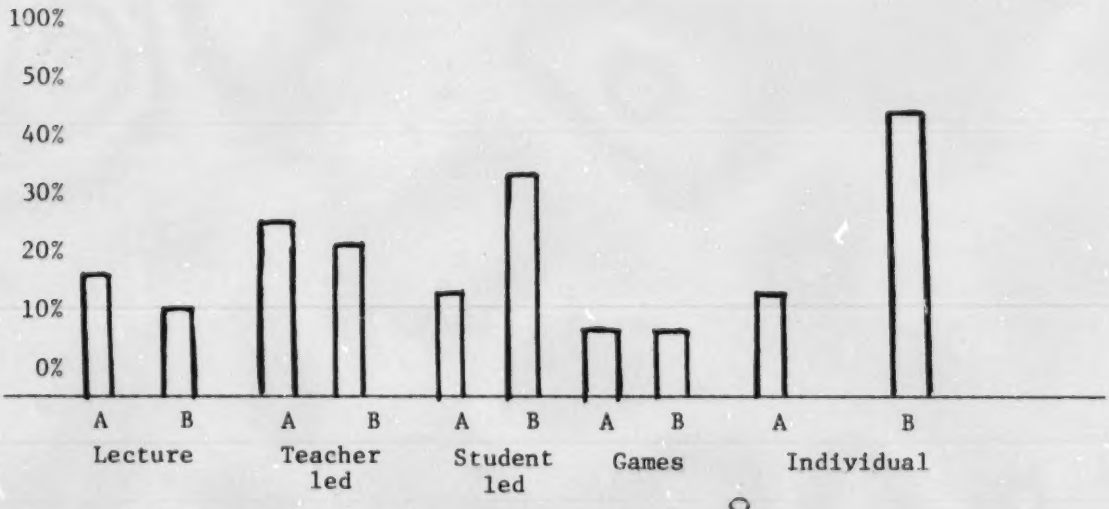


A = Basic course B = Advanced courses

It is interesting to know what percent of time students are subject to each of the above teaching methods. That will give some profile of what teachers perceive their methods to be. Such analysis can be made from data in Table 6 for basic and advanced courses.

TABLE 6

Method and Time



A = Basic Course B = Advanced Course

When asked the question, "Is student performance present in your class?" teachers responded in the affirmative in nearly all cases. In addition, 67 percent of those teachers responding, reported utilizing student performance more than 50 percent of the time in their classroom. On the other hand, when teachers were asked whether or not students studies listening in their class, 69 percent said yes; but, of those who had a unit on listening 69 percent spent less than 10 percent of the course time on the unit.

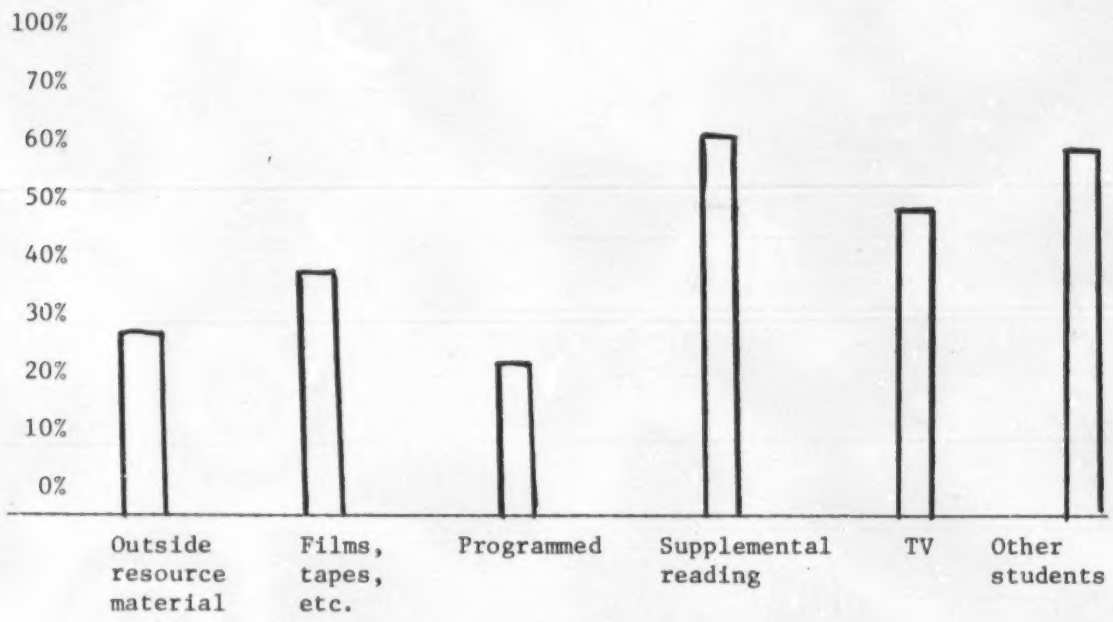
Given that this examination is of a speech class, it would be expected that there should be considerable oral activity. Teachers were questioned about the number of graded speeches required from students, the number of ungraded presentations by students, and the total number of oral presentations given by students during the period of the course. Results reported are as follows: 53 percent require five or less graded speeches, 40 percent require five or less ungraded presentations, and 45 percent require a total of five to ten oral presentations.

Teachers report using units of study for 90 percent or more of the time in their classwork. When asked if they saw themselves as a communication model for students, 97 percent said yes. Surprisingly, 100 percent of all teachers sampled viewed themselves as a critic of student's performance (it seems rare to have 100 percent of teachers agree to anything).

In addition to themselves, teachers rely upon a variety of materials to supplement their instruction. Among those reported, supplemental reading was reported as being used most often. The rest of the distribution for supplemental methods used in the high school speech course is reported in Table 7.

TABLE 7

Usage of Supplemental Methods

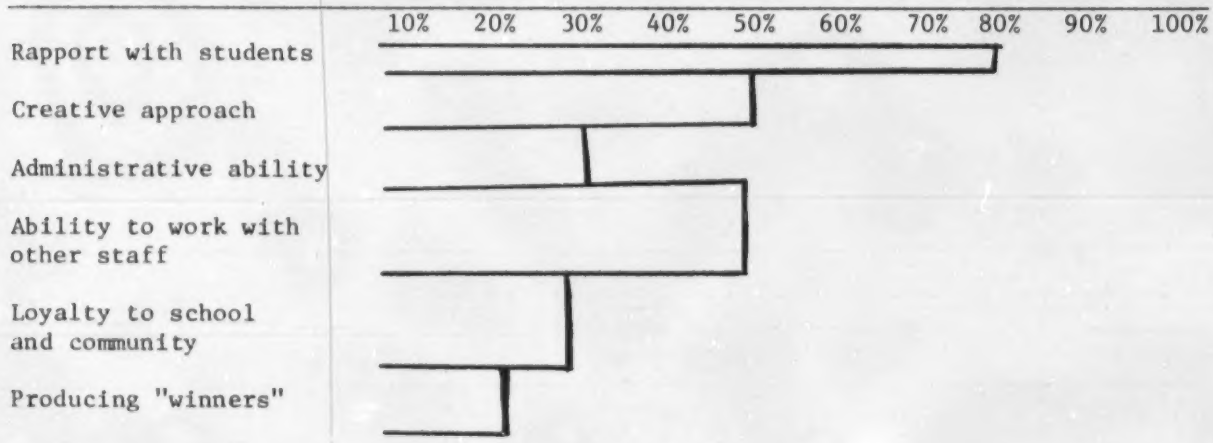


The most frequently found textbook in the speech classroom (31 percent) is Person to Person by Galvin and Book. Those reporting no textbook at all are next on the frequency list. A tie for third most commonly used textbook exists between The Art of Public Speaking by Elson and Peck and New American Speech by Hedde and Brigance.

With the role of teachers encompassing a wide array of functions, it is interesting to examine what speech teachers view as their own strengths. The following traits were measured to determine which factor teachers considered as their greatest asset.

TABLE 8

Perceived Strengths

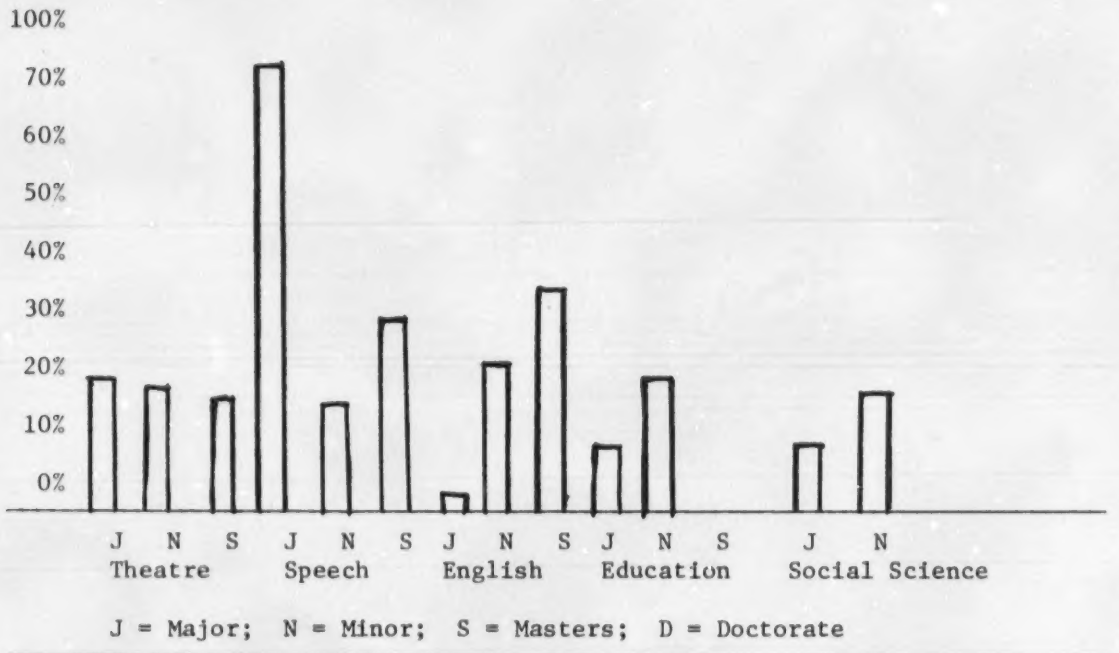


Profile of Teacher's Preparation

Teachers were asked about the degree that they held, the degrees that their colleagues held, the professional organizations that they belonged to, the years of experience they have in teaching, and the base salary for a bachelor and master's degree in their respective school districts.

It was found that the greatest number of teachers of speech had majored in speech. While the rest of the teachers of speech did not hold a degree in that field, it is interesting to observe who else is teaching speech courses. The data is reported in Table 9.

TABLE 9

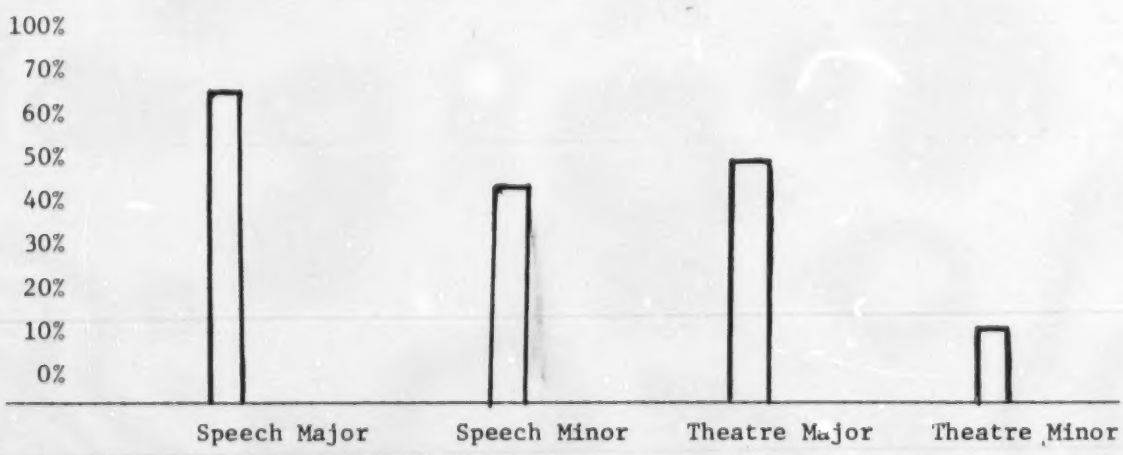


J = Major; N = Minor; S = Masters; D = Doctorate

The total number of faculty who teach speech with various majors/minors is repoted in Table 10.

TABLE 10

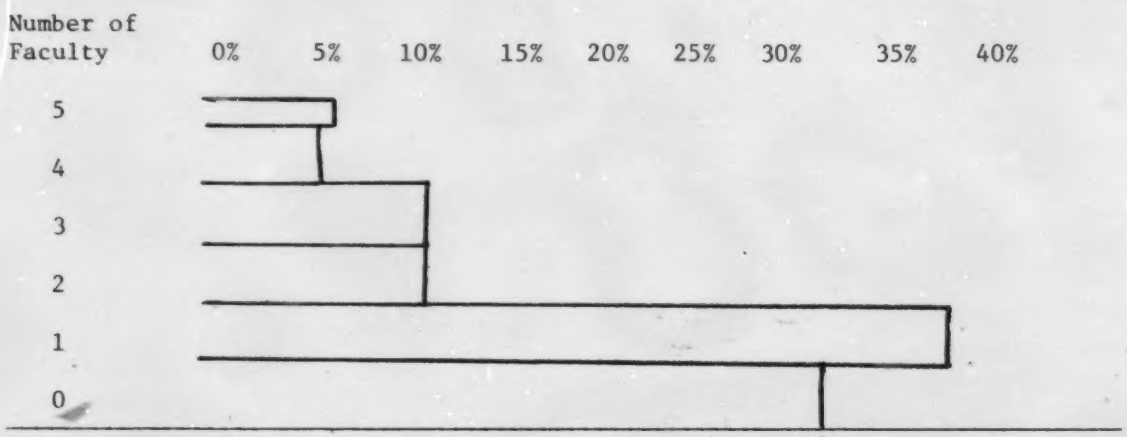
Degree Held by Speech Teachers



It was reported that for the most part only one person taught full-time curricular speech and drama. Yet, some schools do have several teachers teaching full-time. There were 5 percent having as many as 5 staff. The data is reported in Table 11.

TABLE 11

Number of Faculty Teaching Full Time Speech



Profile of the Teacher in Extra-Curricular Programs

An often heard remark by speech teachers is that they feel like they are always on the road. This statement of feeling would appear to be true, considering the amount of time and committment needed in order to maintain the kind of extra-curricular speech programs reported.

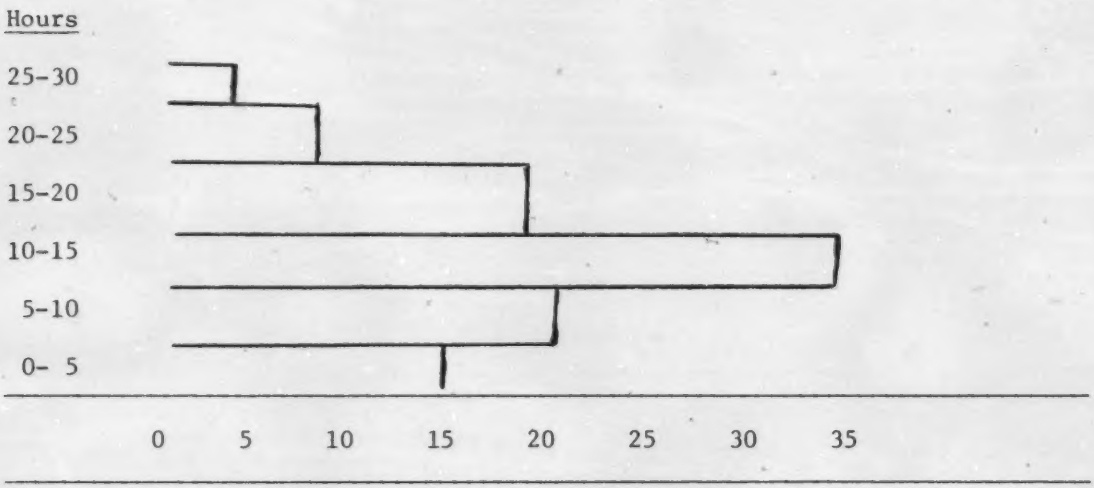
Of all the extra-curricular speech and drama programs examined, 83 percent were not credit generating. That means the directors, coaches, tec. were working in addition to classroom activities. The number of students involved in extra-curricular speech activities ranged from 1 to 400. The most common number of students was between 1-25. Of the programs which have more than one coach, each staff member is found to be working with 1-25 students in the extra-curricular program.

The extra-curricular activity programs that high schools have are Individual Events, Debate, Drama, and Public Service Communication. Teachers report that 85 percent of the schools compete in I.E., 73 percent compete in drama, 40 percent compete in debate, and 15 percent have a public service communication program.

Just as in any extra-curr-cular event, speech activities require that speech teachers spend long hours. The amount of time reported is outlined in Table 12.

TABLE 12

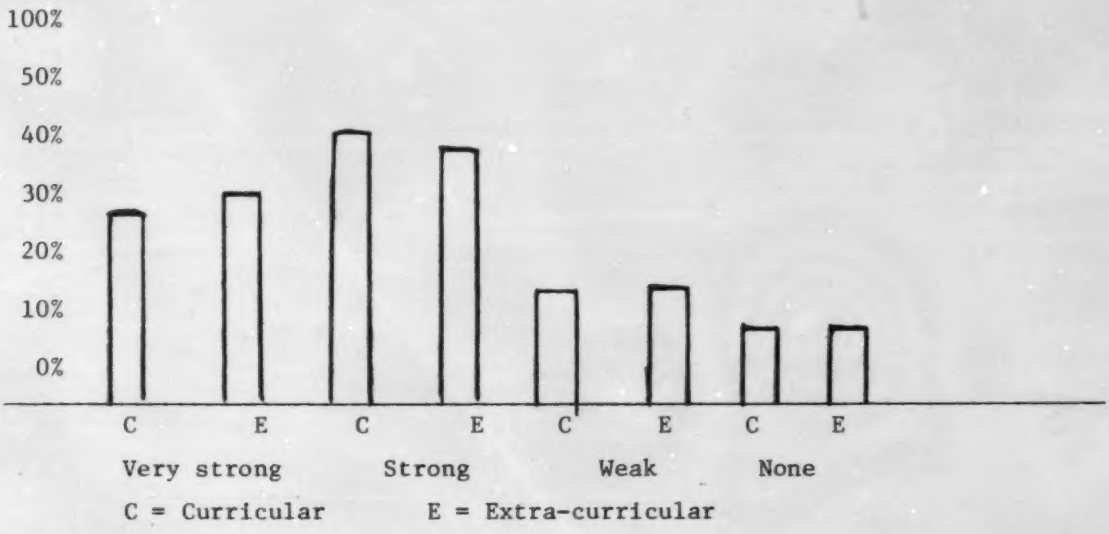
Hours Spent in Extra-Curricular Activities



With the amount of students involved in speech along with extra time spent by teachers coaching various activities, one would hope that the support of the administration is strong. It was found that teachers view the administration support as strong. Table 13 reports the data.

TABLE 13

Perception of Administrative Support

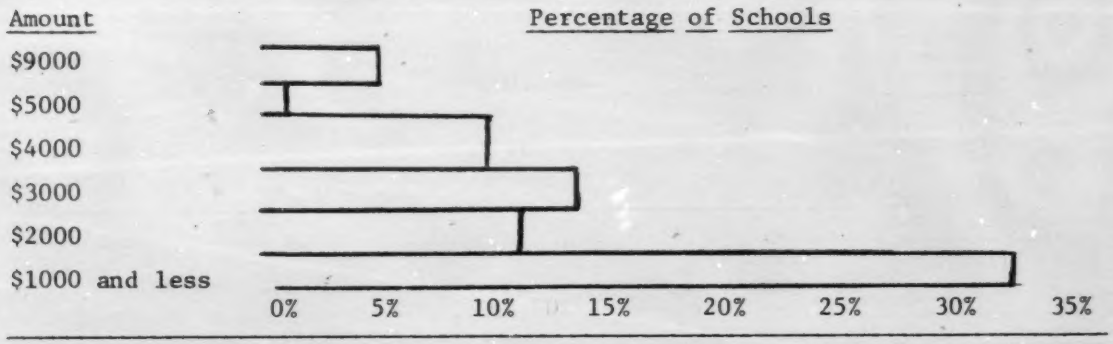


It was found that the majority of teachers do not teach any other classes besides speech and drama. Those who do have extra-curricular activities other than or in addition to speech activities were responsible for class sponsor, student council, and similar supervisory roles.

The reported budgets for Forensics varied from $0 - $9000. The number of schools with various budgets is reflected in the chart in Table 14.

TABLE 14

Amount of Extra-Curricular Budget



The amount of money allocated to programs is used to compete at various tournaments. It was reported that 35 percent of all schools compete in I.S.T.S. tournaments, 75 percent compete in I.H.S.A. tournaments, 29 percent compete in N.F.L. tournaments, 31 percent compete in conference or league tournaments, and 55 percent complete in invitiational tournaments. It was reported that 55 percent of schools host one or more contest. The average number of plays that a high school produces is two, the average number of three acts produced is two, while the average number of reader's theatre done outside the classroom is one.

Discussion

The analysis of the data can be used to create a profile by first constructing the credentials of the teacher; second, looking at what he/she does in the classroom; and finally, examining the extra-curricular activities for which he/she might be responsible. Then it should be possible to arrive at a clear description of who teachers speech, and what they do in and out of the classroom setting.

Teacher Preparation

The majority of speech teachers have majored in speech; with the most selected minor being reported as English. The next group of majors who teach speech the most are English majors. It thus appears that there is an intertwined relationship between speech and English in many high schools.

Surprisingly, theatre majors and speech minors are just about equal in terms of teaching speech classes. There is the possibility that the theatre majors teaching speech have also minored in speech.

It was further found that the majority of teachers who had done graduate work, had done so in speech. The high percentage of teachers who have majored in speech and the number of people who have done graduate work in speech suggests that for the most part, teachers who are teaching speech have prepared for that role. This is a reversal from data of earlier studies.

Teachers who are trained in speech reported that they teach only speech and drama classes and handle primarily extra-curricular activities in speech and drama. This suggests a trend by administrators to recognize the speech teacher as a specialist in his/her field.

In the Classroom

At least 95 percent of teachers who teach speech, teach a basic course. More than half of these classes are required. Other courses that speech teachers teach are, in rank order, advanced speech, mass communication, acting, debate.

The survey outlined four basic approaches: rhetorical principle, performance skill, interpersonal and career orientation. Out of these four approaches, theperformance approache ranked number one. While a write-in approach took second-half performance and half interpersonal. Surprisingly, the career approach was not reported as being used in any high school. Clearly, there appears to be two major approaches to teaching speech. It also appears that the teacher has great latitude in selecting which approach they are going to use.

In both basic and advanced speech courses, it was reported that teachers use a variety of teaching methods. However, student performance was recorded as being present in all the classrooms sampled at a rate of 50 percent of the

time or more. The high rate of performance expected from students is manifested in oral presentations. The average number of oral presentations given by students was from 5-10.

Listening was reported to be studied in 69 percent of the classrooms sampled. However, for the most part it was studied for less than 10 percent of the total class time. Thus, it appears that while teachers are attempting to teach listening, they probably do not spend sufficient time on the subject in order to have a strong impact.

Teachers view themselves as a communication model for students and as a critic of student performance. Teachers consider rapport with students as their number one strength.

Teachers do use a considerable amount of supplemental material in addition to lecture and textbooks. Supplemental readings are the most often supplement to their own activities. The most frequently used text is Person to Person and yet teachers report preference for a performance approach.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Teachers working with an extra-curricular program can expect that the program will not be credit generating. In rank order, the typically found speech activities were: I.E., drama, debate, and public service communication. The average number of students that a teacher directly works with is between 1-25. The extra time spent per week on coaching and directing was between 10-15 hours. Most teachers view support from the administration for curricular and extra-curricular activities as strong. This would imply that the typical speech teacher finds considerable job satisfaction.

The budget allocation for forensics varied greatly from zero to $9000. The majority of schools sampled compete in I.H.S.A. contests and I.S.T.A. contests in addition to invitationals. Therefore, it is likely that the speech teacher will spend considerable time transporting students for inter-scholastic competition.

Your profile? You are likely to be much better trained in your field of speech. You probably use a variety of teaching methods. Chances are you will be the only person teaching speech and coaching extra-curricular work unless you are in a large school. You probably use a performance approach in the classroom. You may have considerable budget. It is likely that you feel your administration is supportive of your curricular and extra-curricular program.